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INFO RUEHJS/ASSOCIATION OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN NATIONS PRIORITY
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY
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RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA 1964
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 1485
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 4698
RUEHUL/AMEMBASSY SEOUL 4386
RUEHWL/AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON 2301
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI 1568
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 JAKARTA 000222

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [MARR](#) [MASS](#) [ID](#)
SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR'S MEETING WITH INDONESIA'S TOP MILITARY
COMMANDER

REF: A. JAKARTA 0164
[1](#)B. JAKARTA 0083
[1](#)C. 07 JAKARTA 3335

Classified By: Ambassador Cameron R. Hume, reasons 1.4(b,d).

[1](#)1. SUMMARY: In a February 1 call on Indonesian Armed Forces Chief of Staff General Santoso, the Ambassador discussed progress in U.S.-Indonesian defense relations and future regional security challenges in Southeast Asia. Santoso, who in December was appointed to the TNI's most senior position, welcomed closer mil-mil cooperation with the United States, reviewed progress on military reform and said Indonesia's view of a U.S. presence in the region remained positive. The Ambassador said the United States wanted to continue to work with the TNI to promote reform. END SUMMARY.

[1](#)2. (C) Chief of Staff (Panglima) of the Indonesian Armed Forces (TNI) General Djoko Santoso welcomed the Ambassador in a courtesy call on February 1, noting that the Ambassador was the first ambassador to pay a courtesy call since Santoso's installation as head of the armed forces on December 28, 2007 (ref c). Santoso expressed the hope that the United States and Indonesia could maintain a constructive dialogue and enhance bilateral cooperation during his tenure.

MIL-MIL COOPERATION CENTRAL TO BILATERAL RELATIONSHIP

[1](#)3. (C) Congratulating Santoso on his recent appointment, the Ambassador said mil-mil cooperation was central to the bilateral relationship and needed to move in step with overall bilateral cooperation. The relationship had seen many good years and a few bad years. The Ambassador said he hoped both countries could turn their attention from the past and focus on the future. The relationship should be natural, constructive and based on mutual understanding.

[1](#)4. (C) Over the past several months, the Ambassador noted, he had worked to remove internal USG restrictions on the training of the Indonesian Army's Special Forces, KOPASSUS. He would travel to Washington in the next two weeks to update agencies and Congress on this and other aspects of the security cooperation agenda. He expressed appreciation for

efforts of the new Navy Chief, Admiral Sumardjono, to find a way to proceed with the emplacement of naval surveillance radars in the Malacca Strait and the Sulawesi Sea (ref b).

15. (C) Santoso agreed that it was better to look to the future. Indonesia and the United States could cooperate constructively in the future, and both sides should think about how to improve cooperation. He recalled positive discussions he had had with senior U.S. military officials in recent years, including with JCS Chairman General Schumaker in Bangkok in 2005, LTC Brown in 2006 and Army Chief of Staff General Casey in 2007. Santoso expressed appreciation for the Ambassador's efforts to persuade colleagues in Washington of Indonesia's progress. Engagement and assistance by the U.S. military with the Indonesian Army, Navy and Air Force was helping to professionalize and reform the TNI, Santoso said.

FUTURE CHALLENGES IN EAST ASIAN SECURITY

16. (C) The Ambassador said East Asia was changing rapidly. Washington was pondering the future U.S. role in the region. The United States was a Pacific power, and this would not change. The rise of India and particularly China was creating a new environment. This was a natural process and was occurring in a non-threatening way, but the United States and states in the region needed to consider how to adjust to these changes. It was important to begin now to develop answers together.

17. (C) Santoso said the TNI's view of the United States and its role in East Asia had not changed. It was the U.S. view

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of Indonesia which had changed. Over the years, Indonesia had contributed significantly to U.S. interests in the region. Since independence, Indonesia had coped with the challenge of radical Islam, providing a basis for cooperation against international terrorism. Indonesia had collaborated with the United States to oppose communism. Given these common interests, Indonesia and the United States should find it easy to cooperate and to agree on the proper role of the military in a democracy.

TNI REFORM

18. (C) Santoso said TNI reform involved five main areas: 1) an end to involvement in politics and government, 2) an exit from commercial activities, 3) subordination to the rule of law and civilian authority, 4) professionalization and 5) improving the welfare of TNI personnel. Along with withdrawal from political activity, the TNI had changed its structure and doctrine consistent with a democratic order. The TNI had completed its inventory of TNI-related businesses and it was now up to the government to decide which ones to transfer. President Yudhoyono had agreed that soldiers should be subject to civilian justice for non-duty crimes and now was seeking the necessary revisions in legislation and legal codes to implement this decision. Santoso said the success of efforts to professionalize the military and improve the welfare of its personnel depended largely on financial resources, notably the national budget. The TNI welcomed U.S. help in increasing the professionalism of the TNI to make it fully compatible with democracy.

19. (C) The Ambassador said he agreed with General Santoso's description of reality and commented that some in the United States were still seeing Indonesia as it had been eight years earlier. It was clear that the TNI and Indonesian society had constructively dealt with many challenges and had made great progress on reform. This provided a basis for cooperation against future challenges. The United States wanted to continue to support reform and work constructively with Indonesia. Visitors from Congress, the Administration, U.S. industry and foundations often remarked, after visiting

Indonesia, that they had been unaware the country had changed so dramatically.

¶10. (C) Santoso said a key challenge, particularly on the Indonesian side, was public relations: the Indonesian press now had broad freedom, but often this meant exposing the bad while ignoring the good. He noted the recent case where his words, he asserted, had been misconstrued by the English-language Jakarta daily newspaper, the Jakarta Post (ref a). The Ambassador said there was no doubt that huge, revolutionary change had occurred in Indonesia. A change of this magnitude could not easily be stopped or turned aside, and certainly did not hinge on a single statement.

¶11. (C) Santoso said the authoritarian Suharto era had delayed the development of democratic institutions in Indonesia, and this had affected the TNI. Education and economic welfare were now leading national priorities. Indonesia appreciated U.S. help in overcoming these obstacles. The Ambassador acknowledged these challenges as real.
HUME